"Third he directs his attention to the knowledge of the destruction of the asavas*. He duly understands, 'this is pain,' 'this is the cause of pain,' 'this is the cessation of pain,' 'this is the way leading to the cessation of pain.' He duly understands, 'these are the asavas,' 'this is the cause of the asavas,' 'this is the cessation of the asavas,' 'this is the way to the cessation of the asavas.' When he thus knows and thus perceives, his mind is released from the asava of lust, from the asava of (desire for) existence, from the asava of ignorance. In the released is the knowledge of his release; he understands that rebirth is destroyed, the religious life has been led, done is what was to be done, there is nothing further beyond this world."

At the New Year, then, the King of the tha-gyas, who are Dewas, comes to visit the earth which is suffering its hottest and driest month and looks to rain and coolness for deliverance. Before the descent each year, brahmins and astrologers get together and calculate the exact hour of his arrival, the means of his descent to the earth, whether astride a buffalo, a *naga* or a *galon* and whether he wields a spear or a water jar, for by these signs will the nature of the coming year be decided—heavy rains or drought, good crops or disturbances in the land—and the duration of his stay on the earth. All their findings are collected in leaflets which are distributed as the *tha-gyan sa*, and when I was young I used to think that they fell from heaven as prophetic messages. Actually the present day practice is to fix April 13th for the official occurrence of Thingyan each year. The celebration of the festival by pouring of water is to honour the heavenly visitor, to wash away the old year's dirtiness and to begin the new by good and auspicious deeds.

By the day before Tha-gya Min's arrival in Ye, the *a-kyo nay*, the preparing-to-greet day, bamboo palisades had been put up along the verandahs, arrangements had been made for communal celebration and large-scale washing and feeding. All the girls spent the morning grinding thanakha and other fragrant barks and the boys went out to cut the leaves of the *the-byay* tree for the sacred water pots to be poured out at the arrival of the visitor. In the evening, Grandmother and other old people walked up to the rest houses near the monastery where my father had been educated, for at their time of life, fasting, meditation and the contemplation of younger people's enjoyment is the happiest way of greeting the New Year. In the evening, too, we carried out Grandmother's good deed of inviting a number of people from the village to come and wash their hair. Hairwashing is part of the New Year's rituals because the noblest part of the body, the head, must be in a clean condition at this time. In the days of the Burmese kings, there

* Desires and impulses, expressions of the clinging to existence.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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sailors; only where the tar thinks he will be saved from drowning, the Turanian expects to gain the patronage of any great person he may address.

The infant having survived and the mother recovered from her roasting, the next thing to be done is to name the child. This usually happens about a fortnight after the birth. A fortunate day and hour is sought out by some Brahmin astrologer, or a sayā of lesser note, if there is no such dignitary in the neighbourhood. A great feast, as elaborate as the wealth or the ambition and borrowing capacities of the parents admit, is prepared, and all the friends of the family and the neighbours are invited to come. The child's head is usually washed for the first time on this day. The ceremony is therefore called kin-bôn tat thi. A decoction of the pods and bark of the soap acacia (*Acacia rugata*) or kin-bôn is prepared, and with this the midwife washes the infant's head and the guests wash their hands. Most of them bring friendly contributions towards the feast, or perhaps a little money. The mother sits down in the centre of the circle with the infant in her arms, and near her is the father. The company sit gravely smoking and chewing betel for a time, and then some elder, or a near relation of the parents, seems struck with a name, and suggests it aloud. Everybody accepts it on the spot, and falls to discussing the aptness of the name and the accomplishments and virtues of people they have known with that appellation. This is, however, all a pre-arranged thing. The father and mother have settled beforehand what the child is to be called, and have apprised the lu-gyi selected what is to be the result of his cogitations. The midwife then gets a present according to the means of the family, having previously, after the seven days' roasting, received the regulation fee of one pyi, the sixteenth of a basket of husked rice, one mat, and a four anna bit. Then everybody adjourns to the feast, which, with the dessert of le'-pet, salted ginger cut into small strips, ground nuts, fried garlic, the invariable betel apparatus, cheroots, and what not, pass the time till nightfall, when, except in the case of poor people, there is always a pwè which carries on proceedings till the next morning.

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Burmese AP4

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which every Burman has, and carefully consults, with the help of an astrologer, for the fixing of fortunate days and hours throughout his life. Sometimes the sadā is drawn up very shortly after birth, but ordinarily not till the child is five or six years old. Then an old Pônna, a Brahmin, or any ordinary astrologer is called in. He records on a doubled up strip of palm leaf the year, the month, the day and hour at which the child was born; the name given to it; the planet in the ascendant at the moment of birth and the house in which it was at the time. This is scratched neatly on the palm leaf in the usual way with a metal style. On the other side are a number of cabalistic squares and numbers from which the future calculations may be made. There are said to be eight gyo, or planets, and from these the days of the week are named, Wednesday having a second, Yahu, which rules from mid-day to midnight. Each of the planets has its own point of the compass as follows:—

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Yahu. 12 Symbol—Tuskless Elephant. Wednesday, 12 P.M. to 12 A.M. Unnamed.	Thauk-kya. 21 Symbol—Guinea-Pig. Friday. Venus.	Taninganwe. 6 Symbol—Kalohn. Sunday. The Sun.
Kyathabade. 19 Symbol—Rat. Thursday. Jupiter.		Taninla. 15 Symbol—Tiger. Monday. The Moon.
Sane. 10 Symbol—Nagah. Saturday. Saturn.	Boddahu. 17 Symbol—Tusked Elephant. Wednesday, 12 A.M. to 12 P.M. Mercury.	Ainga. Symbol—Lion. Tuesday. Mars.

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The stations, numbers, and symbols of the planets are recorded in a jingling rhyme, which is one of the first things boys learn in the monastic schools, *e.g.*—

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1° 910 AP1 Burma AP1
Burmese AP4
Indians

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in the country. A very common scene shows the punishment which awaits fishermen in the next existence. The miserable destroyer of animal life is represented as dangling by the tongue on a fish-hook, while demons jerk him into the air, and drop him back into a lake of burning pitch. Many of them have inscriptions below to explain the subject of the picture. Thus in Pagàn:—

"When King Ne-bin Min-gyi reigned in Methila over the ten governors, according to the old books, the Thagya Min came from the nat heavens to help him."

"In the Monastery Yatana Shwe-daing, our Lord preached the Patenôn Tagayo, and remained several days."

"Shin Thumeda (Gautama), in the land of Thudawdana, received the Buddhaship under the banyan tree."

"Payā Alaung Theidat (the embryo Budh, Prince Siddartha), the King's son, married 4000 charming Yathe-mya."

"Our Lord rides on the elephant Nalagiri."

And so on in great variety. One also often finds such a notice as this scrawled on the wall: "In order to be prepared and to gain happiness in the seats of men, of nats, and of ne'ban, the rice-pots are set in order, the images are erected, and the paintings on the walls painted."

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The monasteries are built, supported, and furnished by the pious, but there are not a few of them that have considerable sums of money laid away, usually under the control of the kappiya-dāyaka, the layman who lives in the kyaung, and provides for the wants of its inmates. A number of the royal fields round about Aungbinle, where the Burmese army assembled to seek victory before entering on a campaign, were set apart for the use of the Royal monastery at Payā Gyi, and the revenues were kept in a huge money-chest, which was always under the care of a guard of soldiers. Much of the money was devoted to the adornment of the adjacent pagoda. None can be spent on embellishing the monastery itself. That would be as great a sin as if a monk should build one for himself, besides that it would be depriving the populace of much opportunity for gaining merit.

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There are a few monasteries of the Pônnas here and there in the large towns throughout the country. These

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Burmese AP4

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Brahmin priests were originally brought captives from Manipur, and have been employed as astrologers ever since, their ranks being occasionally recruited by new arrivals. One of the requests preferred to Colonel Symes on his embassy to Ava in 1796 was that he would persuade the Governor-General to send a learned Brahmin and his wife to the capital. The race has been maintained tolerably pure, and the Pônna is readily distinguishable in the streets from the pôngyi. The astrologers muster naturally in greatest force in Mandalay, and their monastery there is situated in a magnificent grove of trees south of the town, and close to the cemeteries. Unlike the native religious, they do not raise their houses on posts above the ground, but follow the Indian custom of having the mat-covered earth for their floor. Foreigners are not admitted into their temples, but there is no objection to the images being brought out by a Pônna for exhibition to his friends. They worship Krishna and twenty-five other deities, but have all but no congregation, few of their faith coming to Mandalay, and those laymen who were carried away at the same time as themselves into captivity having turned to the Buddhist faith.

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No yahan is allowed to have a separate monastery built for him until he has spent five full Wā under the discipline of a prior. These Lents must also be consecutive. According to their seniority in this respect the monks obtain names. Thus a pyin-sin who has spent five years—which of course is implied by the Wā—is called Anuti, and is a fit object for the pious to honour by erecting a special kyaung for him. When he has been ten years in the order he is addressed as Myizza-ti, and those who have remained steadfastly for twenty years, attain to the full honour of Mahā-ti. Such a self-denying man is always sure of a magnificent funeral when he dies.

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It is a very good point about the life in the monastery that the great austerities and absurd mortifications of the flesh indulged in by the Brahminical houses find no place with the Buddhists, who reject them as unnecessary and unprofitable. The life of the initiated is one of constant self-denial; all superfluities and luxuries are renounced; all that is calculated to excite the passions is forbidden; but there

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If a hen lays an egg upon a cloth, its owner will lose money. To come across mushrooms at the beginning of a journey is a most fortunate sign. A snake crossing the path always denotes delay, whether in a lawsuit, a journey, or a warlike expedition. If a dog carries an unclean thing up into his master's house, he may get thrashed for it, but the man will become rich; and so on in infinite variety. 787

All this belief in supernatural powers tends to produce abundance of experts who profess to be able to explain signs and to control the evil spirits. Every district possesses its nat thungè, or nat meimma, a spirit woman who dances at the nat feasts, and at ordinary times is consulted by the superstitious on all kinds of subjects connected with her trade. She is asked where so-and-so, lately deceased, is, to what seat of the world he has migrated; where absent persons are, and what they are doing; what facilities there are for special undertakings, and when they should be begun. 791

The Bedin Sayās claim similar knowledge, and are equally abundant. Numbers of them may be seen at any time of the day sitting under the trees on the way up to the Shwe Dagôn pagoda, writing and rubbing out figures and letters on their black note-books, and drawing a comfortable income from an unfailing succession of inquirers. Sometimes such a magic-worker, wishing to establish a reputation, or having a spite against somebody, performs the ceremony called pônnaga taikgyin. He carries off some cinders from the funeral pyres of people who have been burnt, and collecting a large assortment of such charred pieces of wood, puts them secretly in the house of the person whose feelings he wishes to work on. At night the spirits come and keep up a battery of stones on the unfortunate man's roof, all attempts to find out where the stones come from being as unavailing as they were in a similar instance in the suburbs of London not very long ago.

It is consolatory, however, to know that piety will protect any one from the attacks of malevolent spirits. Numerous stories told by the yahans prove the virtue of the gâtas to guard against evil. If the victim has only knowledge and strength of mind sufficient to recite these religious formulæ, 789 776

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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774 The whole notion is of course foreign to Buddhism, and
●791 is viewed with great disfavour by the members of the sacred
795 assembly, but they are no more able to put a stop to it than they are to suppress nat-worship in the subsidiary form in which it still exists. It is somewhat discouraging to those who have the welfare of the people at heart; yet still when one comes to highly civilised countries such as are found in Europe and finds ghosts only a little less demonstratively believed in, a load is removed. The world is very small after all.

774 The leip-bya idea, like a good many other peculiarities of the Burmese, occasionally gets them into trouble with foreigners. It is the cause of the great unwillingness all Burmans have to wake a sleeping man. It is obvious from the above explanation of the character of the leip-bya, that it would be highly injurious to rouse a man suddenly from his slumbers. His butterfly might be wandering far from the body, and probably would not have time to hurry back to its tenement. Then the man would certainly fall sick, or at any rate would be indisposed for a time. Consequently, it is useless to tell a Burman servant to wake you at a certain hour. He will come in at the appointed time and look wistfully at you, and wish something would fall down and make a noise; but he himself will tread as softly as a housebreaker, and will not even have the heart to instigate somebody outside to make a disturbance. The Englishman has not got "humanity," it is true; he has not been in a monastery, and is therefore not really a "man"; but there is no knowing but what he might have a leip-bya for all that. Consequently the master is not wakened, and gets up an hour and a half after he wanted to, and storms at the poor Burman for a lazy scoundrel who snores away till the sun is as high in the sky as the pagoda spire, let alone a tari palm.

The same thing occurs out in the country villages. An English assistant commissioner rides unexpectedly into a small towulet in his subdivision and calls for the headman. That worthy is having his afternoon siesta, and the good wife announces this with a composure which almost surprises the young sub-janta wallah into swearing. He says, "Well, then, wake him, and tell him to bring his accounts along to the traveller's bungalow." Old Ma Gyi shudders

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

789 to the branch of learning to which they have applied themselves more particularly. Thus there are—

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1. The Pyada wéza, the mercury wise man.
2. The Than wéza, the iron wise man.
3. The Se wéza, the medicine wise man.
4. The In wéza, the wise man learned in cabalistic signs and squares.

The than and in sorcerers are the most powerful and efficacious in their workings, whether for good or evil, and the others are looked upon more as experimenters and candidates for the higher ranks than as legitimate wizards. To the class of mercury wizards belong all those who make a regular practice of the study of alchemy with a view to the production of gold and silver, and on this subject almost every Burman has some pet notion. The medicine wizards are those who set up as professional doctors on the score of a particular knowledge of herbs and simples. It is a very simple matter starting as a doctor in Burma. All you have to do is to assert that you have acquired a special knowledge, and set to work prescribing the most villainous-tasted and drastic medicines you can concoct. As long as an undeniable result one way or the other is produced you are sure of getting a certain amount of reputation.

The than and in practitioners have a more legitimate title to the name of conjurers or workers in magic. The title of iron wizard is merely typical, and implies that the man has a knowledge of the properties of all natural objects, and is as capable, or more so, of acting the *rôle* of a medical adviser as the professed doctors. The discovery and preparation of the pieces of metal, stones, and what not, that are let under the skin of soldiers and dacoits is carried on by them, and this vending of charms is a regular source of income to them. An occasional marvel worked now and then acts as a recommendation and advertisement of their powers. Thus I have seen a hmaw sayā, a kind of generic term applied to all wonder-workers, roll up pieces of gold and silver leaf and thin sheets of copper, and throw them into a bowl of water. They of course sank immediately to the bottom, and then the sayā would make passes with his

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hands and mutter an incantation, when the metal would slowly rise to the top and float there. When sceptics were present, this man would suddenly stop the charm he was uttering, and the bits of metal would either remain floating in the middle of the bowl of water or sink down again, according to the part of the spell to which he had reached. How it was done is only known to wizards of his class and sleight-of-hand people perhaps, but to the actual fact of this khôntet letpwè, as it is called, numbers of people, Europeans as well as Burmans, can testify. The conjurer is a well-known man near the village of Pantanaw, fifty miles or so west of Rangoon.

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But however many miracles the than wéza may work, he is always exceeded in reputation by the constructor of cabalistic squares and symbols. These are in constant use by every Burman, or rather he gets them made and interpreted for him by a proficient. The horoscope which every one has drawn up at his birth has numbers of these mystical numbers on it, from which lucky days and dangerous combinations may be learnt. To calculate the more harmful spells the in sayā should have these data, or at any rate should know the date and hour of the victim's birth. Therefore it is a safe rule never to let a wizard or conjurer see your sadā, or to mention the hour of your birth to any one whom you may suspect of having an ill-will against you, for he might from even that one fact have a most potent charm thrown over you. These mystic squares and numbers have most extraordinary virtue. By holding up one of a particular kind for a short time you can set a house on fire. Another in engraved on a stone will make it float, and such a stone, buried in the skin of a man's body, would prevent him from drowning, unless some other magician destroyed its influence by a more potent spell. If you scratch an in on a tree or a house, you can make lightning strike it; another arrangement of the cabalistic words or numbers will preserve it from such a calamity. There is probably not a single Burman, tattooed at all, who has not several ins on different parts of his body. Some of them protect from special ailments; the most common are those which avert dangers from bullet or sword-cut.

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The doings of the wizards therefore enter largely into Burmese domestic life. There is a sôn in the neighbourhood, and all the mischief which happens there is ascribed to him, while the aid of the in sayās and others is called in to frustrate his knavish tricks. The sôn is of course unknown, or the people would soon make short work of him. In remote country places, among other remnants of trial by ordeal, they still occasionally put a suspected person to the old test. A woman is suspected of being a sônma. Her hands and feet are tied, and she is placed between two boats moored out in the river. A quantity of filth is heaped upon her, and the boats are then drawn away so that she falls into the water. If she swims she is a witch, and is put to death If, on the contrary, she sinks, it is a proof of her innocence, and the accusers are punished. To prevent her from being drowned, a rope made of green bark is tied round her waist, so that she may be pulled on shore again. The great danger from the witches is that, like the *wehrwolf*, they can assume the appearance of animals, or living people, even of one's own relations. If, however, the apparition is wounded, the same injury will be found on the person of the actual witch. Few people, however, have the courage to attack a nocturnal visitant whom they believe to be a sôn, and prefer propitiation in the shape of refections laid outside the house. In all these points the beliefs and fears coincide with those of other countries, and it is therefore unnecessary to do more than allude to them.

The rudiments of the science are contained in the volumes of the Bedin and a book on astrology and cabalistic science called the Deittôn. These are very imperfect, and individual magic-workers advance far beyond the matter to be found in them. It is said that these books were complete, but that in the time of the Lord Buddha the people, worked on by his vivid preaching, seized on all the magic volumes, together with all weapons and objects for destroying life, and heaping them together, set fire to them. But Dewadat, cousin of Shin Gautama, and always plotting harm against him, snatched several of the sections from the flames, and so a portion of the old science was preserved in the world. This tradition of course shows the attitude of the monks and the

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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religious towards the students of this sort of learning. Nevertheless, just as every Burman at some time in his life dabbles a little in alchemy, so the bedin sayās and hmaw sayās, and the magicians, good and evil, obtain believers and clients.

As the sôns are supposed to afflict people with strange illnesses, the province of the wézas becomes very much mixed up with that of the professional doctors. The latter cannot complain, and the general public can see no reason why the one should not be as good a physician as the other, for doctors in Burma take no diploma, and are not required to give proofs of skill in the healing art to any one but themselves. Many of them therefore are the most arrant charlatans, giving medicines according to fancy and in unlimited quantities. On the principle of like to like, prescriptions mainly composed of cayenne, cloves, ginger, and the like, are made up for fever patients, while purgatives are rigidly withheld. If a patient says he is no better five minutes after he has swallowed a dose, something else is tried, and so on, till the wretched victim has a stomach loaded with drugs to the limit of the prescriber's pharmacopœia. These quacks are too often taken as the only representatives of Burmese medical skill, and it is denied that any one in the country has a right to the title of doctor at all. But it is certain that some have really useful and efficacious remedies for ordinary ailments, such as jungle fever, dysentery, and other frequently-met-with diseases, while it is admitted that they are particularly successful in the treatment of sores and ulcers. I knew of a case in Rangoon where varicose ulcers, which had resisted the efforts of the best English doctors in Rangoon and Calcutta, yielded to the simples of a Burmese sethama. He used earth-oil with an infusion of some seed or bark, and speedily effected a cure. The Burmese *materia medica* consists of barks, leaves, flowers, seeds, roots, and a few simple minerals, of which they have an empirical knowledge. They especially deal in pills and powders, which they carry about with them in little phials of bamboo. These little cylinders are usually gilt and painted bright red, and are always strongly perfumed. It does not so much matter about the materials as at what time of the moon and under what constellations the ingredients are gathered. Whoever reaches a place within three days

14: Brant E-5 (1949-50) 1954 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

584 [791] is not particularly well known to them. The boy's parents will be informed by the girl's family that their decision must await the outcome of consultation with an astrologer concerning the compatability of the birth dates of the prospective bride and groom. If the marriage is found to be an auspicious one -- which it usually will be found to be if the girl's parents desire the match -- an affirmative answer is relayed to the boy's parents. The latter thereupon call on her parents, and in the presence of elders, formally ask for the girl's hand. From this moment the couple are considered betrothed and must not go about in public unchaperoned.

585 The wedding date is astrologically determined. The length of the engagement depends upon the availability of an auspicious wedding date. In general, lengthy engagements are disliked. In no case should an engagement carry over the period of Waso, the so-called Buddhist 'Lent.'

Before the wedding ceremony, the bride's house is open to friends and relatives, who are expected to drop in to help prepare the house for the wedding, lending household items that may be needed for the occasion. A pavilion adjoining the house is erected to accomodate the crowd that will attend. All the helpers and would-be helpers in this work are offered meals and light refreshments.

The bride's family normally bears all the expenses of these preparations, but sometimes the boy's family will mention a sum of money either as a contribution towards the wedding or as an indication of their son's ability to support a wife. If such funds are offered, they will be mentioned at the time the girl's hand is sought.

One room in the girl's house is set aside as the bridal chamber. In families of average or better means it is furnished with a bed, draperies, and complete toilet and dressing facilities. In poorer families that cannot afford to furnish the bridal chamber in elaborate fashion, some show of style will be made in furnishing the bed, at least. By the evening before the wedding day the room must be ready, with all the wedding gifts on display.

On the wedding day three or four intimate married friends of the girl dress her. This must not be done by widows or divorcees, for it would bode ill for the marriage. For unmarried girls to perform this task would be immodest. Neither should a pregnant woman take part in dressing the bride, for that would be bad for her baby. The dressing of the bride must begin sufficiently early so that she will be completely ready at a precise, astrologically determined wedding hour.

The bridegroom's party arrives just prior to the appointed time for the ceremony. It includes two of his bachelor friends as well as his family. He takes his seat on a cushion on the platform that has been specially erected. The bride is brought out by her matrons and approaches with eyes downcast. She takes her seat on a cushion to the bridegroom's left. Across the platform, from left to right, are placed three silver offering bowls. A fourth bowl, on the right hand edge of the platform, contains puffed rice. The bridegroom's bachelor friends take seats to his rear; the matrons of the bride sit directly behind her.

794 585 A lay elder, arranged for by the bride's mother, officiates. He recites a paean of praise concerning the merits of the bride and groom and the goodness

Nats' powers for good include protecting the village from dacoit attacks but does not extend to modern warfare. When the Japanese armies were slicing up through Tenasserim in 1941, the elders of Maung Maung Than's village prayed for nat protection against the invaders. The nats replied "Dear Villagers we ourselves are wearing raised longyis in this crisis (ready to run)." This is a Rangoon town joke told among the sophisticated collegiates at the University. Not so well defined, but still sensed is a growing distrust of the powers of nats to combat modern evils.

The nats can best be visualized as supernatural despots each with his province (the home, village, sea, babies) and each exacting tribute of periodic or constant attention in the form of flowers or food, red and white cloth strips, and an altar which may have the image of the nat carved in wood (or moulded in modern plasticene). Banyan trees with their multiple, snake-like trunks, are the most common places of abode. When disaster in the form of sickness or other ill fortune strikes, the nats are appeased with offerings immediately. The SAY SAYA will frequently check with the family of his patient to make sure this has been done. In Rangoon and elsewhere, business men whose fortunes have been good are the main supporters of the nat festivals which are given for the entertainment of all the nats once a year in October, for a seven day period. NAT KADAW (nat-wives) are the mediums who contact the nats by becoming possessed by them at this festival and other special occasions (for a single nat) throughout the year. These are married women or more rarely homosexuals who dance, answer questions and give opinions when possessed.

Punishment for offense against the nats is first shown by accidents or sudden illnesses like paralysis meted out to the offender. If the offender continues the village as a whole will gradually be afflicted. For example, when a drunkard offends the nats with blasphemous language evil falls on the entire village. Villagers led by the elders and a prominent NAT-KADAW go in a body to the major banyan tree shrine to have an understanding with the offended nats. Offerings are given and attention of the nats called to the woes of

(arm-tie) charm consisting of a small metal tube bound about the upper arm or neck and containing an inscription written by a pongyi on silver or aluminum foil. Once a year, after new years (in March), a PAYA-TUDA (prayer-recite) ceremony is held. At this time pongyis recite the precepts of Buddha for the benefit of the ghosts - who "become hot and run away". Younger people, especially children, are susceptible to being possessed by ghosts. At this time they "throw fits" and are uncontrolable. Under the supervision of a pongyi the ghost is cast out by means of threats and beatings administered to the person of the possessed one. Beatings are severe and continuous often lasting an hour, until the ghost says he is "afraid" and departs. The possessed one, thus cured, does not later complain of rough treatment since this is borne by the invading ghost. Perhaps this relates to the less formulated, "nameless horrors" of unseen and unaccountable forces that cause otherwise unexplainable events - which concept pervades much of western thought to this day.

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A major difference between nats and ghosts is that ghosts cause only harm while nats are ordinarily beneficial in the manner described above. Ghosts may also be controlled for evil purposes against individuals in a variety of black magic. The specialists in black magic are PAH-YOH-GA-SAYA (influence-masters) of black magic or "lower - "upper root" (heaven) masters combat the "lower root evil" root", (hell-evil), who administer the evil influence. Witches also have personal magic powers that allow them to cause harm to an individual by introducing foreign matter such as lumps of meat, hair balls, into the body of the victim. It is never known for sure who the witches are but old women of peculiar habits, and especially of the fishermen's group, are suspected. Such individuals are considered generally malivalent and special precautions are needed to avoid offending them. The influence masters, however, are well known and receive gift-fees for performing services either of causing or controlling black magic influences. Both groups, but especially the influence masters of the lower root control ghosts for their purposes.

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A major means of securing control of a ghost or "ghost-rearing" is to get the finger bone of a recently deceased person who died a "raw death". Incantations said over the bone insures the obedience of

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the ghost who must then render services as requested. "To rear ghosts is like keeping a cobra in the pocket" indicates the delicate relationship between captive ghost and master. An individual with a grudge against another for real or imaginal offenses will frequently secure the services of an influence master and his "pet ghost". When the victim feels the effects, as in cases of sudden illnesses such as appendicitis, heart trouble, or fainting spells, his family contacts another influence master (upper root type) to, by incantations, cast out the ghost from the victim. This results in a secret contest of magic between the influence masters involved.

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In actual practice no influence masters admit to rearing ghosts and the first-cause aggressor does not indentify himself as such. Influence masters play an important part in differences between affinal families. In this case the mother-in-law constantly competes with her son's wife for the attentions of the son. The mother will notice the lack of attentions, or monetary support of the son and his corresponding infatuation for his wife. She will claim that the wife is exercising magical control (usually through food) on the son. An influence master is applied to in order to control this evil influence by incantations, medicine, candles, and always an ingredient of money. When the wife's family understands what is happening they will also secure the help of another specialist to counteract the influence. The son is thus torn between the two forces. He is at first oblivious to this but later becomes uneasy in mind. If the strain on the son is too severe the mother may give in and the difference resolved on her part - whereupon the son continues in his former course. Often he will berate both groups saying " I am only normal, you are foolish to involve yourselves in a dispute". Sometimes the mother wins and the son thanks her for intevening and saving him. Another common situation is where a wife seeks to control the influence of another woman on her husband (when he philanders). In this case the forces are directed against the woman, who is to blame, and not the man.

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In the town centers the decline in one's fortunes is often blamed on the evil influence of one's rival. It is said that administrative

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796 hold contributes as much as it wants to from one anna to eight annas. If more money is needed, people who have money contribute more. These offerings are given so as to keep danger away. It is not for merit. We don't know about that. One thing is certain; epicomics like plague and cholera never visited our village, and we have not had a single case of dacoity in our village in my whole lifetime.

"The headman makes the necessary arrangements, buys the black rice, coconuts, jaggery, Burmese tea leaves, candles, bananas, and places them on the special place prepared for them.

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796 "We have not seen any person here in Rangoon being possessed by spirits, but we did have acquaintances in Pantanaw who were possessed, he loses consciousness of himself as a human being. He begins to tremble, and the Nat begins to speak through his mouth. I don't believe in the other Nats, but I do believe in U SHIN GYI because of the testimony of my own eyes. In the districts we place offerings to U SHIN GYI on a small bamboo framework made of four little bamboos each with a diameter about the size of your fountain pen. This framework is held together with pith of the mat fibre plant (HNEE). Sometimes sceptical people take a hand when the framework is being put up, and tie the HNEE very lightly, so as to break very easily. As a result the TAUNG high framework is so flimsy that it would collapse even if a bird were to jump on it. But the strange thing is that when a person becomes possessed and leaps onto the altar and dances about - nothing happens. In this condition, a person may perform on the harp (SAUNG) even though in his ordinary waking life he does not know how to play it. He also dances on glass tumblers. This took place before the whole of our family, together with about a hundred other spectators. Ko Ba THin's son, Htun Ngwe, who is of the same build as myself, leaped onto the bamboo framework and began eating the food laid out on it. On that occasion we had been expecting Ma Kyin Yone to be possessed, but she did not appear because her husband would not allow her to come. We had invited her to come because she had been possessed before. In our village these two were the only people who were possessed. The man was possessed once, and the woman about six times. On these occasions the whole village turns out to watch.

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"The altar is built on the evening previous to the ceremony. It is made of two levels, and is about 4 TAUNG square and one TAUNG high, and is used to hold 37 plates, each holding plantains, black rice, coconuts, jaggery, LAPHET (Burmese pickled tea), etc. The elder in charge then prays to the 37 Nats including U SHIN GYI for help. This ceremony has nothing to do with the phongyis, and the village phongyi is not invited. The two spheres are entirely different. The phongyi does not worship the nats. The systems of belief are entirely different. We worship both. The spirit does not appear at every ceremony - only when there is someone to possess. We had relied on Khin Yone but she did not appear and Htun Ngwe was possessed instead.

"When the nat spoke through Htun Ngwe we asked him about himself and his past life, but he refused to say anything, saying that it made him sad to think back on it.(the possessing nat's past). When the person recovered and we questioned him, he could not remember anything of all that had occured while he was in the trance. In the whole district there are only four or five people who have been ever possessed, and so the majority of people in the district have not witnessed a single case of possession of Nats.

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796 "U SHIN GYI avoids eating flesh, does not drink liquor, and even when eating betel does not put tobacco (HSE) in his quid. Out of all the food that is offered to him, the nat partakes only of a little of the black rice, the remainder being shared by the members of the village. Enough food is prepared to feed the whole village, and a crier is sent through the village to announce a general invitation to everyone. When food has been

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1980) 1987 AP1 Burma
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drama. In 1916 I saw a *Nibbathkhin* at the obscure town of Pauk. For this period, I am greatly indebted to the notes made by my father. They are the results of inquiries and researches spread over a period of forty or fifty years. I realise that to many European scholars the section on the *Nibbathkhin* must appear conjectural in its dependence on tradition. My plea is that at present there is nothing else to depend on.[1]

With regard to the interlude, I am on surer ground. Again I depend much on tradition, but it is now tradition supported by evidence. Besides the general and common tradition, there is the tradition of the spirit mediums and actors, and, as I shall explain, the tradition of my own family.

Professional tradition of the mediums and actors is more reliable than common tradition because the two professions, especially the former, are closed fraternities, and as written records were never in use, they handed down the facts regarding the nature and history of their callings by word of mouth. To them oral tradition was as strong as written records. Moreover, their oral tradition can be checked by the stage conventions which exist at the present day. The various stage conventions are considered in Chapter VII.

The tradition in my family[2] begins from about the year 1800. About that time, an officer[3] in the victorious army of King Bodawpaya

[1] Even Harvey, who wrote his *History of Burma* at Exeter College, Oxford, often accepts oral tradition supported by no other evidence as substantially correct (*History of Burma*, pp. 33, 41, 211, 252, 267, 299). In two instances, pp. 33 and 41, the tradition cited dates back to the eleventh century A.D.

[2] My father is U Pein, District Magistrate, Burma Commission, now retired. In Burma, historical researches and inquiries are often made by administrative officials, as their duties carry them all over the country and to the remotest villages. Messrs Harvey, Stewart, Furnivall—great names in the Burma Research Society—are all officials belonging to the Burma Commission.

[3] He was Maha Minhla Mindin Raza.

I have to cite in this section the full names and official positions of some members of my family because:

1. As the Burmese use no surnames, my name alone would not convey anything regarding their identity.

2. The service record of the family may perhaps be construed as evidence in favour of the reliability of its tradition. G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 310 where he rejects Fuhrer's statement regarding an inscription because the 'precious slab has never been produced, and in view of Fuhrer's service record its production is essential.'

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1980) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

have been celebrated year after year, at least since the reintroduction of Buddhism in 1056, and at least since March, 638, when an early king of Pagan, Popa Sawrahan (613–40), drew up the present Burmese era, the dawn of every Burmese new year has been the occasion for mirthful water-throwing.[1]

Buddhism had been introduced into the country through commercial relations with India long before the foundation of the kingdom of Pagan, but from the beginning it was only at second-hand and therefore feeble. The real religion of the Burmese before the reintroduction of Buddhism in 1056 was animistic, and they worshipped various spirits, known as *nats*. There were mediums, mostly women, who danced to please the spirits, and as the spirits were supposed to enter into the bodies of the mediums, sometimes it was believed that the spirits, and not the mediums, were actually dancing. Sometimes the medium herself actually believed that a spirit had taken control of her body, but usually she only pretended that a spirit had entered her, and gave an exhibition of acting. As the medium of each particular *nat* dressed herself in appropriate clothes, the spirit dances were essentially dramatic.[2] When Buddhism, in one of its purest forms, was introduced under Anawrahta, the great king realized the impossibility of attracting people suddenly to the new faith; so he compromised by recognizing the *nats* as Buddhist spirits and giving them shrines in his Shwezigôn Pagoda as its guardian spirits. When asked the reason, Anawrahta replied: 'Men will not come suddenly to the new faith. Let them come for their old gods, and they will gradually be won over.'[3]

So the worship of the *nats* lived on, and with the advance of

[1] Shway-Yoe (Sir George Scott) in *The Burman: His Life and Notions*, and Fielding Hall in *The Soul of a People* give detailed accounts of the feasts and life in the villages. However, as far as I have been able to find out, the Tazaungmôn celebrations have never been described in any English work.

[2] These dances are still performed on spirit-feast days at Taungbyôn (near Mandalay), a small town given up to spirit worship since the days of Pagan's greatness and perhaps even before.

The belief in, as distinct from the worship of, spirits is not alien to Buddhism.

The chief works on the subject are: Sir R. C. Temple, *The Thirty-Seven Nats*; Grant Brown, 'The Taungbyon Festival' in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1915; the same author's 'The Pre-Buddhist Religion of the Burmese' in *Folk-Lore*, 1921; and G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*.

[3] G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 33.

21: Htin Aung E-6 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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However, the Burmese equivalent of the English interlude came into being all the same. It developed out of the equivalent of the English miracle play, but indirectly. The chance of developing the drama was seized by professional actors. To break away from the tradition and the conservatism, persons outside the pale of 'good' society were needed. Spirit dancers were such persons. They worshipped the *nats*[1] and most people looked upon them with fear as being in touch with sinister and unnatural forces. They were outside the religion, and their drunken dances—drunken from wine and ecstacy—were outside the popular conception of moral behaviour. Therefore the new professional actors were drawn from the ranks of the spirit mediums. However, those who took to the new profession were malcontents and failures in their original profession. The increase in the number of the spirit dancers had caused the mediums to form themselves into a fraternity, the entry to which was closely guarded. The economic attractions of spirit dancing tempted people who had no faith in the spirits to become mediums. These factors caused discontent and disunion among the mediums, and within and without the fraternity pseudo-mediums came into being. The advance of education had robbed the *nats* of many worshippers, but most people continued to patronize spirit dancing for mere love of music and dancing. The result was the rise of a class of professional entertainers who danced and sang and played on musical instruments. The new dancers pretended to be mediums and semi-mediums, but their dancing was unconnected with any spirit feast. The rise of this professional dancing was doubtless gradual and must have preceded the *Nibhatkhin*. As early as about the year 1400, two princes and their attendants, when turned out of their palace, earned their living as wandering minstrels and professional dancers, pretending to be spirit worshippers.[2] Because of the very fact that the new dancers were malcontents and failures in their original

[1] The objects of the spirit worship are the thirty-seven *nats*, all of whom are more or less of evil character; but there are in addition to these many good *nats* who have little to do with human affairs. [776]

[2] One prince became King Minkaung (1401–22), the other, his brother, helping him to gain the throne. An attendant became King Mohnyinthadot (1427–40), and the others ministers (G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 96). [175]

The new dancers were mostly men. Men mediums were secondary to women mediums, and perhaps that was one of the reasons for the discontent among the mediums, and also the reason why the men took to wandering all over the country as dancers. [462]

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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profession of mediums, they could break away also from the tradition and conservatism of the spirit worshippers. They were outside the religion and outside the spirit worship. They were fettered by nothing. They were the only persons who could develop new ideas with regard to the *Nibhatkhin*. And they were the first to realize the possibilities of the new entertainment. Soon they had developed it into the Burmese equivalent of the English interlude.

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The professional dancers became actors. People were no longer satisfied with mere dancing and singing, for the *Nibhatkhin* had given them some taste of the dramatic scene. Therefore the dancers in the middle of their entertainment paused and gave a little scene, or rather a one-act play. The male dancer became the hero, the female dancer the heroine, and the other two or three dancers became minor characters. The clown had been long before borrowed from the *Nibhatkhin*, and he became a mimic-dancer attending on the others. For two reasons the scene was always the forest. First, it did not need much stage scenery, as the branch of a tree would be enough to indicate that the action was supposed to be taking place in a forest. Second, the journey through a forest by the hero and heroine made it possible for human beings and fairies, demons and gods, princes and commoners to meet and take part in various adventures and misadventures. Thus the Burmese interlude came into being.

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Perhaps it is not illogical to wonder whether there was an intermediary stage of development, whether there were plays comparable to the English morality plays, bridging the gap between the *Nibhatkhin* on the one hand and the Burmese interlude on the other. It is of course impossible to be certain with regard to the question, for no Burmese miracle play or interlude has come down to us in writing. I have said[1] that there are oral accounts regarding the *Nibhatkhin* and that entertainment which I have termed the interlude, and also written accounts regarding the latter. But there is absolutely no mention in those accounts of anything which could be termed the Burmese morality play. Yet, I venture to think that there must have been plays comparable to the English moralities. If it should be presumed that the interlude developed directly out of the *Nibhatkhin*, there would be a big gap between the two. I think that the professional actors first gave semi-religious plays in imitation of the *Nibhatkhin*. I think also that there were also plays actually dealing with abstract notions of morality and religion which formed the

[1] Introduction, pp. 7–10.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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151. THE IDEAL AND THE REAL

They are generally condoned. Burmans do not wait to make money in order to marry, but marry in order to make money. Girls marry from the age of about twenty, and men about twenty-five. The marriage is a quiet affair. A day is fixed, when the lad and his parents repair to the home of the girl, whither some of the elders of the village (*lúdyí*) have been invited for witness. The father of the lad addresses the parents of the girl in this wise: "Seeing that our children love each other, we pray you let your daughter be as our daughter and our son as your son" (*ekkau*). The girl's parents express their pleasure and approval, and according to one usage, the couple thereupon join hands (*lettat*), which means marriage; but the joining-of-hands is as a rule figurative. After this the lad goes and fetches his bedding, curtain, and clothes and places them in the house in token of reception into the family. In conclusion, the parties and the witnesses eat pickled tea together. When one or both parties are strangers in the place, friends undertake the part of parents and the elders make inquiries as to blood-relationship and pre-existing ties. Kinship closer than first-cousin and the corresponding step-relationships are respected—except by royalty (p. 170). Sometimes marriages are of a more festive description (*mingala*). Astrologers are called in and company entertained as at the *náhauk mingala*. Other unions, again, are by mere mutual agreement, without formalities of any kind. By time-honoured custom the lads of the village claim the right to pelt the house of the new-married pair at night (*gé-pyit*), and it is usual to buy them off. New couples mostly start life in

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152. TATTOOING (TOGWIN, see p. 28).

29: Slater M-4 (no date) 1951 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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customs. Grant Brown observes that, while Buddhists in the Chindwin area still sacrifice fowls to the god of the harvest, 'the thing is done somewhat surreptitiously and shamefacedly.'[12]

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Other practices survive more openly. In many Burmese villages there is a *nat-ka-daw*, or spirit-medium, generally an elderly or middle-aged woman, who is supposed to be married to a *Nat*. She tells fortunes, and is called in sometimes in cases of sickness to discover whether the patient will recover. Mr. Spear describes an incident of this kind which took place in the main street of a large town in the presence of many spectators. "The *nat-ka-daw*, in addition to her usual clothing, wore a sash around the waist and a cloth wound around her head. She danced with a dah, a long and heavy Burmese knife, in her hand, until she fell exhausted." Plantains and coconuts had been placed in a shelter, opposite the house, as offerings to the *Nat*.[13]

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In this case, apparently, the *Nat* was neither held responsible for the sickness nor expected to cure it. There are times of epidemic sickness, however, when a whole village is temporarily abandoned, and special rituals are followed to placate the *Nat*, who is considered to have caused the epidemic.

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In an interesting account of the development of a modern *Nat* cultus, a Burmese writer describes a public festival in honour of the *Nat*. A play is staged during which one of the Thirty Seven *Nats*, who is personified by a villager, asks the *Nat* of the locality if he is taking due care of the villagers. Here the *Nat* is obviously regarded as benevolent. But we are told that this was not always so. Formerly the Nat was cruel, unreasonable, mischievous and demoniac. But "he is now believed to have taken to religion, to keep the sabbath and to lead the life of a saintly god." In

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spite of his own sanctity, however, he seems to favour evil-doers. "No organised theft is ever committed in Lower Burma ... without invoking his aid." The would-be criminals cook a meal within a circle they have marked on the ground. If any of the rules of the succeeding ritual are

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broken, the proposed robbery is abandoned. Some Buddhist monks of this region, more orthodox than others, have tried to suppress the Nat cultus, but in vain.[14]

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Such beliefs and practices are obviously bound to affect thought and conduct. The Burmese feel around them a vast, invisible *Nat* world, which is both near and remote. There are spirits in the trees, the rivers,

[12] *The Pre-Buddhist Religion of the Burmese*, p. 9.

[13] R. F. Spear, unpublished MS, *The Syncretism of Animism and Buddhism in Burma* (1938) chap. 1, p. 14.

[14] U Tha Khin, "Is U Yin Gyi a National God of the Burmans?" *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XIV, part II (1924).